

REMARKS

In the Office Action, claims 5, 6, 9-11, 13, 14 and 20 were rejected, claims 1, 3 and 4 were allowed, and claim 8 was objected to by the Examiner. Applicants thank the Examiner for allowing claims 1, 3 and 4 and for indicating the allowability of claim 8. Claim 5 has been amended to add the language of allowable claim 8 which directly depended from independent claim 5. Previously withdrawn claim 2 has been added to the claim set as dependent directly on allowed independent claim 1. Claims 6-8 and 12-20 have been canceled without prejudice, and claims 1-5 and 9-11 remain pending in the present application. The amendments to the claims should place this case into condition for allowance. All claim amendments are fully supported in the written description and figures of the specification.

Claims 5, 6, 10, 11, 13 and 14 were rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as unpatentable over the Longbottom et al. reference, US Patent No.: 6,079,494 in view of the Mashaw Jr. et al. reference, US Patent No.: 5,211,241 or the Schnatzmeyer reference, US Patent No.: 5,957,207. This rejection is strongly traversed, and Applicants reserve their right to prosecute any or all of the rejected claims in a continuation application. However, the rejection is believed moot in the present case based on the amendments set forth above. Specifically, independent claim 5 has been amended to incorporate the language of allowable claim 8, which depended directly from claim 5. Claims 10 and 11 ultimately depend from amended, independent claim 5, and should also be in condition for allowance. Claims 13 and 14 have been canceled without prejudice.

Claim 9 was rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as unpatentable over the Longbottom et al. reference in view of the Mashaw Jr. et al. reference or the Schnatzmeyer reference and further in view of the Bouldin et al. reference, US Patent No.: 5,979,558, or the Schnatzmeyer reference. This rejection also is traversed, but the rejection is again believed moot in light of the amendments set forth above. Specifically, claim 9 directly depends from amended, independent claim 5 and is patentable over the cited references for the reasons provided above with respect to independent claim 5 (e.g. the addition of the language of allowable claim 8) as well as for the unique subject matter recited in claim 9.

Claim 20 was rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as unpatentable over the Longbottom et al. reference in view of the Ellis reference, US Patent No.: 6,073,696. This rejection also is traversed, but the rejection is moot in light of the cancellation of claim 20 without prejudice.

In view of the foregoing remarks, the pending claims should now be in condition for allowance. However, if the Examiner believes certain amendments are necessary to clarify the present claims or if the Examiner wishes to resolve other issues by way of a telephone conference, the Examiner is kindly invited to contact the undersigned attorney at the telephone number indicated below.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. A. Van Someren', written over a horizontal line.

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